



Dublin International Study Centre

ACCESS, TRANSFER AND PROGRESSION POLICY

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Access, Transfer and Progression Policy

Introduction

1. Dublin International Study Centre's (DISC's) Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP) policy outlines the framework for learners enrolled at the Centre to ensure equitable access, transfer, and clear progression routes to higher education. This policy aims to support diverse learners from various backgrounds in achieving their academic goals within an inclusive, safe and supportive environment.

This policy is informed by the QQI Restatement Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression in Relation to Learners of Further and Higher Education and Training, 2015.

Definitions

2. The following definitions clarify key terms used within this policy to ensure a shared understanding of concepts related to learner movement within and between programmes of education and training.

Access refers to the opportunity and ability of individuals to enrol in and participate in educational programmes and services. It encompasses the fair and equitable criteria and processes through which learners may apply for and gain admission to programmes, regardless of their background. Access also includes the process by which learners may commence a programme of education and training following recognition of prior knowledge, skills, or competences required for entry.

Transfer refers to the process by which a learner moves from one educational institution to another, or from one programme of study to another within the same institution. It includes the mechanisms by which learners may transfer from one programme of education and training to another, having received recognition for knowledge, skills, and competences already acquired.

Progression refers to the advancement of learners through successive levels of education or programmes, typically based on academic achievement, skills development, and readiness for further study. The DISC International Foundation Year (IFY) programme provides clearly defined progression pathways that enable learners to continue their education at higher levels.

Access

Admission Requirements

3. Entry requirements for the IFY programme are determined by DISC, with input from the University Partner, University College Dublin (UCD), to ensure coherence and consistency with university entry standards. These requirements are reviewed periodically by DISC and UCD to maintain alignment with academic expectations for progression to higher education. All current entry requirements are published on the DISC website.

DISC applies clear and consistent admissions criteria to ensure that all prospective learners have a fair opportunity to access the IFY programme. Entry to the programme is based on published academic, English language, and, where applicable, mathematical proficiency requirements. Applicants must normally demonstrate an international equivalent to a pass grade at Irish Leaving Certificate Level 5, with enhanced requirements in English and Mathematics aligned to the intended progression degree. Minimum English language entry requirements range from the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 5.0 (or equivalent), with higher thresholds applied for specific academic pathways, including Arts and Humanities and Medicine. Mathematical entry requirements are similarly programme-specific and aligned to the academic demands of the intended progression route.

Full details of programme entry requirements, target learner profile, and admissions procedures are clearly illustrated and publicly available on the DISC website, ensuring that applicants can make informed decisions prior to application.

Academic Entry Requirements

4. Academic entry requirements for each pathway programme are benchmarked to confirm that learners are suitably prepared and have the potential to achieve success in their chosen field of study. As DISC recruits international learners exclusively, a wide range of global qualifications is accepted. These equivalencies and requirements are published and easily accessible on the DISC website.

Minimum Entry Requirements for General Learning

5. Applicants are required to demonstrate that they hold an international qualification equivalent to a passing grade in the Irish Leaving Certificate at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), as determined by NARIC (the National Academic Recognition Information Centre).

Specific entry criteria apply to English, Mathematics, and Science subjects, with prescribed minimum standards that may differ from the general entry requirements. All applicants are informed of these subject-specific criteria during the admissions process to ensure clarity and transparency.

Entry requirements are set by DISC and are reviewed by the University Partner to ensure they remain consistent with university entry standards, progression expectations, and the regulations specified by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). These requirements are recorded in a centralised database maintained by the Study Group Global (SGG) Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team and are published on the DISC website: <https://www.dublinisc.com/how-to-apply/entry-requirements>.

As the IFY programme is delivered in English, all applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency through recognised assessments, such as IELTS or other equivalent qualifications issued by recognised institutions. Information regarding additional accepted assessment certificates is available from the SGG Admissions Team.

English language entry requirements at DISC vary according to the intended undergraduate progression route. The minimum requirements are as follows:

- General Entry: IELTS 5.0 (or equivalent), corresponding to CEFR Level B1+.
- Arts and Humanities Pathway: IELTS 5.5 (or equivalent), corresponding to CEFR Level B2.
- Medicine and Health-Related Pathways: IELTS 6.0 (or equivalent), corresponding to CEFR Level B2+.

IELTS is a publicly available English language proficiency examination developed and administered by Cambridge Assessment and British Council. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by the Council of Europe, provides a neutral global scale for describing language competence. It should be noted that IELTS score alignments with CEFR levels may vary slightly depending on overall candidate population performance.

Applicants who hold an IELTS 4.5 (CEFR B1) certificate may be considered for pre-session English support to help them develop the level of language proficiency required for entry to the IFY programme. This process is outlined in further detail in DISC's Quality Assurance manual.

English language standards at DISC are benchmarked against CEFR descriptors and are aligned with QQI's English Language Education (ELE) Code and Council of Europe (2008) recommendations. Learners are normally admitted at CEFR B1+, with the expectation that successful completion of the IFY Academic English Skills (AES) module will result in B2.2/C1 proficiency, enabling progression to undergraduate study in line with university entry standards.

Providers of English language public proficiency exams are reviewed annually and are set in accordance with the INIS requirements. Certificates must have been issued within 24 months of the learners' programme start date. Any certificate older than 24 months will not be considered valid for admission purposes.

Mathematical Skill Requirements

6. The minimum mathematical skills level required for admission into the IFY programme varies according to the undergraduate degree programme that the applicant intends to pursue. The standard mathematics entry requirement is equivalent to achieving a score of 70 percent in the Irish Leaving Certificate Ordinary Level Mathematics. This benchmark reflects the foundational mathematical understanding and competency expected of learners entering higher education.

Recognition of Prior Learning

7. Recognition of Prior Learning allows for the consideration of applicants who do not meet the specified entry requirements but can demonstrate their suitability for enrolment in the programme through alternative means, allowing them to be evaluated on their individual merits. This process is implemented in alignment with the QQI Policy and Criteria for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

In such cases, the contextual information submitted by applicants will be considered to make an informed decision. This includes, but is not limited to, applicants who:

- Have a non-traditional education and/or work history.
- Have qualifications which were obtained more than two years before the programme start date.
- Have academic credentials not covered in the programme entry requirements.

All cases of Recognition of Prior Learning must be referred by the Admissions team to DISC's Academic Team to ensure that any complex regional requirements (for example, fee status restrictions) are fully taken into account. In cases where a judgement needs to be made, such as when applicants have a non-traditional education background, the Academic Team may consult with the University Partner as necessary, and the decision will be communicated to the applicant.

Access for applicants with Disabilities and Diverse Learning Needs

8. DISC welcomes and encourages applications from individuals with disabilities, health conditions, and/or specific learning needs, and is committed to fostering an inclusive, accessible, and supportive learning environment. A holistic support system is in place to promote both academic success and personal wellbeing, offering learners opportunities for cultural immersion, guidance on student life in Ireland, and access to wellbeing and pastoral support. DISC also provides a range of tailored services, including reasonable accommodations, specialised resources, and personalised assistance, to ensure that every learner can fully participate throughout their educational experience.

At the time of application, applicants are encouraged to disclose any additional support requirements they may have. The Admissions team will forward this information to the Centre Director and/or the Deputy Director – Student Experience for further information.

Once registered a member of the Wellbeing team will meet with the student to discuss how best the Centre can support their need. Based on this discussion an individual support plan may be put in place and reasonable adjustments as required to ensure they are given all the support they need to be successful in the programme.

Discussions regarding the support needs of applicants will be conducted independently and will not influence the evaluation of an applicant's academic qualifications. DISC's criteria and procedures established for selecting applicants are aligned with the requirements of the programme. The criteria are designed to be fair and equitable for all applicants and ensure that applicants with disabilities are not unjustly disadvantaged or excluded from consideration.

Application Process

- Application may be submitted by potential learners, their parents, or authorised agents.

- An agent acting on behalf of a learner must apply by submitting a completed application form via the Agent Portal. This portal enables agents to track the progress of applications and obtain access to programme details and marketing materials.
- Applicants who are not represented by an agent must complete the application form on the DISC website, <https://www.dublinisc.com/how-to-apply/apply-now/> . The applicant will then be allocated a learner Enrolment Advisor (SEA), who is a designated Study Group Global (SGG) staff member, to assist them with their application.
- Applications are normally verified within 48 hours of submission. The verification process involves reviewing the application for completeness and accuracy.
- Applications will be evaluated against the programme's admission requirements.
- If any information is missing or requires clarification, the applicant will be informed accordingly within seven working days. In the event that all criteria are satisfied, an offer letter will be issued.
- Should an applicant not possess the necessary qualifications for admission to the DISC IFY programme, the Admissions Team will explore alternative programmes for the applicant within the wider SGG network.

Offers and Confirmation

- Applicants who have been accepted into the programme will receive an offer letter detailing any outstanding requirements that need to be fulfilled before starting the programme and instructions on how applicants can confirm their place.
- Offers may be unconditional if an applicant has met all requirements or conditional if certain requirements must still be met.
- Applicants will be sent a copy of the terms and conditions and fee requirements, which are published on the DISC website.

Applicants wishing to confirm their place must complete the following steps:

- Return a completed acceptance form.
- Return a completed parent/guardian acceptance form (if under the age of 18).
- Provide proof of payment of the security deposit and administration fee (if paying their own fees).
- Submit a Financial Guarantee Letter (if sponsored).
- Applicants may request to defer entry to reapply for a later intake; however, a re-assessment of eligibility will be conducted prior to a revised offer being issued.
- Applications that have not been accepted or deferred will be closed ninety days after the programme start date.

Quality Assurance of the Admissions Process

9. The Global Admissions team is committed to ensuring ongoing compliance and continuous improvement. To support this, a cross-functional review of the Global Admissions process is conducted annually, of which the outcome is reported to DISC's Operations Committee. DISC may propose recommendations resulting from the report, which the Admissions Team will review and, if suitable, incorporate into the applicable processes.

Specific controls that are used to ensure admissions quality on an ongoing basis include:

- Verification of identification, academic qualifications, and work experience by dedicated admissions team personnel.
- Repeated revalidation of completeness and accuracy of information at each stage of the application process to identify gaps and inconsistencies.
- Use of qualified resources in an applicant's location to validate academic information and the authenticity of transcripts.
- Regular self, peer, and team-led review of processes to ensure accuracy and compliance (e.g. spot checks).
- English language interviews (if required) conducted by individuals outside of the admissions process to eliminate potential conflict of interest.
- Verification of banking information and finances, supplemented by review of learner financial information by functions external to admissions (e.g. compliance and financial controls team).

Regular quality assurance reporting provided to admissions from external functions, including finance and visa compliance.

Transfer

10. Transfer refers to a learner moving from the IFY programme to another programme within the Study Group network or to another institution.

Internal Transfer (Within the Study Group Network):

- Learners may transfer to another IFY programme within Study Group if they meet the entry requirements.
- Applications for internal transfer should be submitted to the Deputy Director - Curriculum and Progression (or nominee) within the first six weeks of academic studies.
- The transfer application form can be located on Study Smart.
- Transfer approval is subject to programme capacity, visa requirements, and academic standing.

- A learner has the right to appeal transfer decisions.

Expanded Appeals Process: Learners may appeal decisions related to admission, transfer, and progression. Appeals must be submitted in writing and will be reviewed by the Centre Director in consultation with relevant academic staff.

External Transfers

DISC can only facilitate transfers to other IFY programmes within the Study Group Network.

Progression

11.

- Successful completion of the IFY (Level 5) programme allows for progression to a higher education programme.
- The Student Wellbeing and Progression Coordinator provides learners with academic and career guidance to ensure alignment with their educational goals and progression opportunities.
- Upon successful completion of the IFY programme, a Level 5 Specific Purpose Certificate (Special Purpose Award) transcript will be issued to learners to support progression applications.

Progression to Higher Education

12. DISC has a formal progression agreement with UCD. Completion of the IFY (Level 5) and attainment of the required progression grades enable learners to access Level 8 programmes at UCD.

DISC programmes are designed to facilitate learners to progress to their chosen undergraduate degree programme at UCD following the achievement of the relevant English language and academic progression requirements. Learners are advised from enquiry, through application and during their studies in terms of what academic and language thresholds need to be reached to enable them to progress to their chosen programme at UCD.

In addition, DISC works closely with UCD to ensure that learners receive comprehensive and useful information in relation to progression, their target qualifications, i.e. degrees, and arranges for academic tutors and advisors from the relevant faculties and departments in UCD to give talks to learners at appropriate points in the academic cycle.

To facilitate progression, DISC convenes a Programme Assessment Board (PAB) to confirm the academic and English language outcomes for each learner; learners are then provided with a transcript.

Learners may request to change their intended progression programme with UCD, subject to any capacity constraints and providing that they meet the stated entry requirements. This must be requested prior to the start of the learner's second term. All

changes are dependent on approval from UCD.

Exit Procedures

13. DISC recognises that learners may exit the IFY programme for a range of reasons, including voluntary withdrawal, academic or administrative circumstances, or programme discontinuation. Clear and fair exit procedures are essential to ensure that learner rights are upheld, academic records are protected, and appropriate supports are provided.

Exit procedures are aligned with the QQI Policy and Criteria for Access, Transfer and Progression, the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, and Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL) requirements.

Voluntary Withdrawal

Learners who choose to withdraw voluntarily from the IFY programme are required to submit a formal withdrawal request and engage in an exit process designed to ensure informed decision-making and appropriate support. Where feasible, an exit interview will be conducted by the Programme Manager to explore the learner's reasons for withdrawal and to consider alternatives such as academic support, deferral, or temporary leave of absence.

Learners are informed of the academic, financial, and immigration implications of withdrawal.

Involuntary Withdrawal

Involuntary withdrawal may occur where a learner fails to meet academic progression requirements, breaches institutional policies, does not meet attendance or fee obligations, or is no longer compliant with visa or legal requirements. Such decisions are taken in line with DISC's published policies and procedures and are subject to principles of procedural fairness.

Learners subject to involuntary withdrawal are formally notified in writing and have the right to appeal decisions in accordance with DISC's Appeals Policy.

Programme Discontinuation or Institutional Closure

In the unlikely event that the IFY programme is discontinued, or DISC is unable to continue delivery, learners are protected through QQI-approved Protection for Enrolled Learners (PEL) arrangements. These may include a teach-out plan or facilitated transfer to an equivalent programme with another provider, ensuring minimal disruption to learner progression.

Certification and Academic Records on Exit

Where a learner exits the programme having completed one or more validated QQI components, DISC will facilitate component certification and issue a Record of Achievement in accordance with QQI requirements. Academic transcripts and confirmation of achievement are provided to support learner transfer or progression.

All exit-related records are maintained securely and in compliance with data protection legislation.

Information relating to learner exits, including reasons for withdrawal and outcomes of exit interviews, will be recorded and analysed as part of DISC's annual monitoring and review process and reported through the Annual Monitoring Report, to support quality enhancement and institutional oversight.

Support for Learners

14. DISC provides a range of supports to facilitate that processes and to help learners achieve successful educational outcomes. These supports ensure that learners are well-informed, appropriately guided, and equipped to make effective decisions throughout their academic journey.

The following structures and roles are in place to support learners:

- Dedicated Admissions Team – The Admissions Team assists applicants throughout the application process, providing guidance on entry criteria and the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) where applicable.
- Academic Advisors – The Deputy Director – Curriculum and Progression and/or the Progression Coach provide individual guidance to learners on available transfer and progression routes, helping them to plan their educational pathways effectively.
- Intervention Log – An Intervention Log is maintained to monitor learners' academic performance. This system supports the early identification of learners who may be at risk of not meeting progression requirements and facilitates the arrangement of targeted academic support.
- University Partner Engagement – Learners have opportunities to engage with various university schools and departments, enabling them to familiarise themselves with higher-level academic environments and to refine their expectations for progression to undergraduate study.

Monitoring and Review

15. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review are essential to ensure that DISC's ATP Policy remains effective, current, and aligned with both internal quality assurance processes and external regulatory requirements. The policy is reviewed as part of DISC's annual quality cycle to promote continuous improvement and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.

This policy is:

- Reviewed annually to ensure continued alignment with QQI regulations, national policies, and sectoral updates.
- Informed by stakeholder feedback, incorporating input from learners, staff, and university partners through the analysis of data obtained from surveys, focus

groups, and review meetings.

- Evaluated using evidence-based indicators, including learner progression data, completion rates, and institutional performance metrics.
- Updated as necessary to reflect any new or amended agreements with university partners, ensuring coherence across all progression pathways.

Document Control

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